



## Narratives

### Executive Summary

RSVP of the Central Coast operates under the auspices of Senior Volunteer Services, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Our main office is located at 660 Pismo Street, in San Luis Obispo, CA, with a satellite office at 528 South Broadway, Santa Maria, CA. The mission of Senior Volunteer Services is to match mature adults with volunteer public service opportunities, both to sustain the volunteers' health and welfare and to utilize their experience and knowledge to address critical community needs. We have a staff of four and contract some functions to control costs. We are the only organization in this area performing volunteer management services focused on older adults. We recruit and place senior volunteers in a wide variety of non-profit and government agencies where we have a Memorandum of Understanding, matching their skills, experience and interests with opportunities for high impact community service. In 2011 our volunteers provided 179,693 hours of service to 200 agencies within our geographic area. Based on the Independent Sector/California 2009 value of a volunteer hour (\$23.42), that equates to over \$4.2 million dollars. RSVP has had a continuous presence in the area since 1972, and 95% of our volunteers report enhanced life satisfaction and healthy aging benefits. Many partner agencies state they would be unable to deliver services to their clients without RSVP volunteers. The longer senior volunteers remain vital and independent, the less strain is exerted on aging support services, allowing agencies to serve their client populations better with volunteer assistance, precluding drawing down on scarce financial resources. Our program is cost-effective, simultaneously contributing to successful aging and providing the volunteers to address critical local needs. Our community partners are varied, with a high concentration of opportunities for service in the focus areas of Healthy Futures (Homebound Seniors & Disabled Individuals), Veterans & Military Families, and Environmental Stewardship. Others are engaged in areas of Health & Nutrition, Housing, Human Needs, Public Safety, Community & Economic Development, Cultural Heritage, Education and Disaster Relief/Preparedness.

## Narratives

### Strengthening Communities

RSVP of the Central Coast serves a beautiful area of over 2,500 square miles situated almost half-way between Los Angeles and San Francisco, California. We serve San Luis Obispo County in its entirety as well as the northern portion of Santa Barbara County. RSVP of the Central Coast has operated continuously in this two-county area since 1972.

The 2010 census indicates a population of 273,231 for San Luis Obispo County with nearly half of Santa Barbara County's population of 419,408 located north of the Gaviota Pass. The combined number for our service area is nearly 500,000 persons. The population is greatest in the coastal plain and valleys in the central and southern parts of the region. San Luis Obispo County population centers include the county seat, San Luis Obispo (44,948), Paso Robles (29,934), Atascadero (28,560), Arroyo Grande (17,145), Los Osos/Baywood Park (16,000), Grover Beach (13,276), Nipomo (13,300), Morro Bay (10,608), Pismo Beach (8,704), Oceano (7,665), Cambria (6,579), Santa Margarita (1,259) and Templeton (8,451). The major cities of Northern Santa Barbara County are Santa Maria (86,931), Lompoc (41,096) Orcutt/Vandenberg Village (34,693), Solvang/Buellton/Santa Ynez corridor (15,648), and Guadalupe (6,594). The wide geographic scattering of communities requires both continuous coordination with many community leaders and of RSVP volunteers to augment organizational capacity and sustainability of both the various agencies and the RSVP project itself.

The economy of the area is mixed agricultural and commercial with limited manufacturing. Tourism is the largest single sector of the economy, and viticulture (a handmaiden of tourism) has overtaken vegetable and beef production to dominate the agricultural sector. Serious concern is expressed by all community leaders and organizations as to the potential economic development of the region, which is mostly peopled by those in low paying jobs.

Persons over 55 years of age make up more than 29% of the area population according to such

## Narratives

reputable sources as the U.S. Census, San Luis Obispo County ACTION for Healthy Communities Survey conducted by the San Luis Obispo County United Way, and THRIVE for Santa Barbara County Survey, conducted in December 2010. The Central Coast attracts retirees from other parts of the state and beyond because of its climate, setting, and activities, which is reflected in the relatively high numbers of older adults in census data. The majority of these retirees continue to be professionals and business managers with significant skills to offer, and they expect to utilize their life skills in meaningful community service when they become volunteers. Over the next 15 years, the over-60 population is expected to increase by 49% or about double the rate of overall growth for the area, fueled by retirees from the urban areas of northern and southern California.

Some area cities perform needs assessments, and both counties survey and publish the expressed needs validated by the surveys. The figures quoted above reference the data relied on for our projections. Although concern for public safety is always high on the list of needs, two other areas of significant concern are the need for proper food and affordable housing. Agencies seeking to augment and expand available services to the underserved portions of the population and the public at large rely on us.

We ensure local input into program design and evaluation by identifying workstations with task descriptions requiring and exercising the professional skills and expertise of our group of retirees. We recognize our mandate is to fill critical needs in the cash-strapped communities. Coordination and personal interface with County Supervisors and City Councils, county department managers, county aging commissions and other boards are the primary means of ensuring local input into determining needs and then coordinating the resources to address these needs through networking, committees, and site coordinators.

As an example, we are justifiably proud of our involvement in the development of The Good Neighbor Program. This program was conceived as a response to the State budget cuts affecting In-Home

## Narratives

Support Services. Assistance in performing simple daily tasks that allow frail seniors and disabled adults to remain safely in their own homes was at risk. The Good Neighbor Program fills that need by providing volunteers willing to prepare a meal, do a load of laundry or light housekeeping, pick up a prescription, perform light yard work or walk a dog. Along with the Area Agency on Aging, RSVP acted as the catalyst for this program, developing a successful working model which was subsequently turned over to a local non-profit. This is one of the largest collaborative ventures in our area, recognized for the outcome of its efforts by the County Board of Supervisors, our State Assemblyman and State Senator, as well as our Congresswoman. Implementing this program, which provides a safety net for those fragile individuals in San Luis Obispo County who are most in need, was a significant achievement.

We direct our efforts to identifying those community programs that best align themselves with our mission. To the extent that the RSVP lifestyle of community service volunteerism offers the benefits of life quality and vitality enhancements to an aging population, RSVP will remain an important element in the region's elder care infrastructure. As our volunteers deliver the services required by the agencies in that infrastructure, RSVP will sustain the efforts of frontline providers during periods of growing demand for services and reduce the strain on public resources. We concentrate on recruitment and management assistance to programs in the CNCS focus areas. Programs that offer healthy futures to area residents, programs that welcome and re-integrate returning military and their families, with emphasis on benefits and opportunities due them, and those that promote sustainable environmental stewardship to protect our precious resources.

We enjoy a high level of trust within the communities we serve because of the quality and reliability of our volunteers. This well-deserved trust is recognized by the Senior Volunteer Services Board of Directors as the greatest asset of RSVP. Our staff is accustomed to dealing directly with community leaders in a collaborative and transparent manner. Bi-weekly press releases are sent to all area media,

## Narratives

a newsletter is published three times a year for the membership and other interested parties, a current list of volunteer opportunities is available on our website at [www.RSVPCentralCoast.org](http://www.RSVPCentralCoast.org), and we make frequent presentations to the media or other groups whenever the opportunity arises. These public relations efforts reinforce the image of RSVP of the Central Coast and enhance recruiting.

### Recruitment and Development

RSVP's outreach efforts are designed to encourage the spirit of volunteerism regardless of one's background. Although our area has a sizeable population of well-educated and comfortably circumstanced seniors, we recognize that willing hearts and hands are the most important attributes of our volunteers and stress that approach in all our press releases and newsletter articles. We know from experience that those closest to needs themselves are often the most ready and willing to help their neighbors. Volunteer opportunities are well publicized to the community through local press, radio and PSA's. Specific to the Latino community we partner with the Literacy Council in the Northern Santa Barbara area to offer adult literacy opportunities. Exposure to RSVP via programs where one benefits is the surest way to attract future volunteers. This is particularly true of the Latino community that tends to stay within itself.

No one knows the value of volunteering better than those directly involved. We assure a high quality experience for volunteers by offering opportunities to build new skills, to develop leadership potential, to reflect on the value of service to the community, and to enhance the quality of their own lives through meaningful dialogue with existing and potential volunteers. Many of our best recruiters are RSVP volunteers who share their stories with their family, friends and neighbors. Offering our volunteers the opportunity to submit their stories for the "Good News" section of our newsletter is one way we enhance the volunteer experience. Recently one of our Literacy volunteers came by to drop off her timesheet. She was obviously very happy. We asked why she was particularly cheerful and her response was, "My student just got her citizenship." She had tutored this woman for almost five

## Narratives

years and felt she had made a significant difference in her life. She has promised to send us a picture of her and her student with a write-up for our next "Good News." Another way we are spreading the message of RSVP's impact on the community is by partnering with the City of Santa Maria to develop a display of "Volunteer Helping Hands." We've secured permission from the City of Santa Maria to develop a presentation in San Luis Obispo County, too. These hands will be spread throughout both geographic areas in a visual display of the variety of ways that volunteers benefit the communities while benefitting themselves. These hands will be on display during National Volunteer Week in 2013. We are mindful of survey results and comments/suggestions from our existing volunteers, and pay close attention to their recommendations. We rely on their suggestions for improvement and offer them opportunities for self-improvement. We maintain close contact with new volunteers, particularly during their first month of service, to determine their satisfaction level with their assignment and inquire if there is anything else they need to know or if they have any suggestions for program improvement. We publicly identify and give credit for program improvement to our volunteers so they realize their suggestions were heard and acted upon.

Mobilization of community resources is achieved through maintaining direct contact with the various agencies we serve. As we are alerted to emerging needs we can evaluate those needs against our existing database or provide specific recruitment efforts, and develop a workable plan to accommodate them. Long-term and ongoing volunteer recruitment is especially critical for local food banks and senior nutrition programs. Our "short term assignment" volunteers fill one-time opportunities throughout the year. We are particularly successful at participating in the Welcome Home Military Heroes events (where we meet our returning or injured military at local train, bus and airport stations), filling needs for the Salvation Army Bell-Ringing Campaigns, staffing the Railroad Festival, and assisting at various fundraisers for agencies such as The American Heart Association, The American Cancer Society, The Alzheimer's Walk, and Family Care Network. Our volunteers recently

## Narratives

turned out in great numbers to honor the Vietnam War's most decorated unit, members of the Bravo Company. 105 of these decorated heroes gathered locally from all over the nation and our RSVP volunteers were among those who came to welcome them with American flags, shake their hands, and thank them for their service. Volunteers who participate in events such as this are very gratified, especially those who have been members of the Armed Forces themselves. Events such as these provide opportunities to engage volunteers who possess a high interest level in working with veterans. Enhancing the capacity of organizations and institutions within our communities is foremost on our agenda. We partner with our agencies in assessing the needs of their clients and are mindful of our role to assist them in responding to ever increasing request for volunteers, caused by greater demand for their services. RSVP volunteers are present at most non-profit and government agencies throughout the two county area and for that reason we are very capable of integrating services to provide the most satisfying experience for our volunteers with greatest benefit to the agencies. Existing partners in constant need of more volunteers are Senior Nutrition/Meals-on-Wheels Programs, Senior and Disabled Adult Transportation, Wildlife Preservation, Parks, and Cultural Heritage Programs. An emerging volunteer opportunity is a new program opening in November, the San Luis Obispo Vet Center, honoring and assisting Central Coast veterans and families. Our RSVP has been involved throughout its development and will be a strong supporter of future efforts. Another new program is the Central Coast Volunteer Veterans' Shuttle collaboration which will serve veterans from San Miguel and Cambria to Shandon and on to Santa Barbara County. It will operate Monday through Friday, and provide regular transportation to medical appointments. Integrating Senior Volunteer Services into the activities of other service programs within the community is accomplished through active attendance and participation by our staff on a wide variety of community committee and advisory councils, and involvement in organizations representing a broad base of agencies. For example, the Director is an active member of the United

## Narratives

Way Advisory Council, the San Luis Obispo Adult Services Polity Council, the Paso Robles Senior Advisory Council, the Countywide YMCA, VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disasters), the Alzheimer's Association, and POLST (Physician Ordered Life Sustaining Treatment). The prior Director remains active in RSVP, serving on the Boards of the San Luis Obispo County Commission on Aging and the Senior Nutrition Program. This is in addition to her volunteer duties as Board Chair of Senior Volunteer Services and a member of the RSVP PAC. We are well represented throughout both counties and known as an effective partner in "getting the job done."

These contacts provide multiple opportunities to get our message out and because we are active in multi-generational programs we are able to partner not only with senior human services agencies but also with those providing pregnancy counseling services, and every other agency in between. Another example of our effectiveness is our involvement with an agency called "Children's Resource Network of the Central Coast." This grass-roots organization has been the recipient of RSVP volunteers' services throughout its development. The director of that program credits our volunteers with being "angels" who not only helped her put systems in place to organize clothing for deserving children, but stored the clothing in their garages until a more suitable place could be located. This program has grown beyond anyone's imaginings. They now have a traveling trailer painted and decorated by a team from our local Home Depot and towed by a truck donated by PG&E. When not traveling, the trailer is housed on a local school campus, and readily available to children in need. They serve a two county area, not only with clothing but with books and school supplies, and have received local, state and national recognition, as well as acknowledgement from the Mexican Consulate for their assistance to Migrant Worker families.

In addition to the collaborative that produced The Good Neighbor Program, our involvement with VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) is helping that group in developing a plan to manage Spontaneous Unaffiliated Volunteers (SUVs), and Spontaneous Donations during

## **Narratives**

emergencies or disasters. The Director serves as Vice-Chair for this group which is comprised of agencies as diverse as United Way, a local bank (who provides a means to accept spontaneous monetary donations), faith-based organizations (that will become temporary volunteer stations), Goodwill Industries (who will accept spontaneous donations of clothing and blankets), The Red Cross (always active in any such event), Office of Emergency Services for SLO County, large and small animal rescue groups, a HAM radio group, to name a few. Close communication among the members of VOAD underpin rapid response to augment the services of first responders.

Many basic needs are being addressed through collaborative offerings included in the Healthy Futures work plans for this grant cycle. Supporting a variety of efforts to allow seniors and/or disabled adults to remain safely in their own homes is at the top of the list. Targeted volunteer recruitment for programs included in the Veterans and Military Families and Environmental Stewardship areas is ongoing and has received greater attention during the past year.

### **Program Management**

Many agencies, lacking volunteer management personnel, refer prospective volunteers to Senior Volunteer Services/RSVP. Agencies must fall into one of 3 categories: 501(c)3; public entity; or proprietary health care organizations. The agency signs an MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) detailing the responsibilities of RSVP and the agency. Upon their enrollment, RSVP recruits for their volunteer opportunities, interviews prospective volunteers to ascertain their level of interest, and refers interested applicants to the agency for further in-depth interviewing. We check back with both the agency and the new volunteer to determine their mutual satisfaction with the assignment. We request that volunteer hours be regularly reported and provide mileage reimbursement to those who qualify.

Training and technical assistance are provided to project staff, volunteers, volunteer station supervisors, and community partners. Training materials offered through The Corporation for

## Narratives

National & Community Service are made available to the various groups. Information is also disseminated through our newsletter for reinforcement. If there is an area of particular interest, members of the groups have the opportunity to participate in discussion or educational offerings via written material, video or Webinar.

Specific community needs are identified and addressed through collaborative partnerships with area agencies. As a result, we are able to provide meaningful placements to our volunteers in addressing such needs. RSVP is the only program in the area specializing in senior volunteer management and the project's expertise is available to agencies on request. We assist supported agencies to improve training, development and retention programs. As a consequence, every agency understands the importance of volunteer recognition and most provide a special activity at least annually to make sure the volunteers know they are appreciated.

Emphasis is placed on sharing the measurable impacts of the programs with the volunteers to motivate them and develop a sense of pride in the importance of their efforts. RSVP volunteers are more gratified to learn that the hospital pharmacy is filling prescriptions 30 minutes faster because of their work than they are over receiving a pin or certificate. They are pleased and proud to recite how many Project Lifesaver units (electronic bracelet for those with cognitive disabilities) are installed in a given community or how many new books are processed and put on library shelves. Volunteer involvement at every step of new and existing program development is key to the longevity among our group of volunteers. We recognize not only the incredible value of volunteer hours given, but also highlight excellent suggestions the volunteers make for program improvement. This approach serves to motivate and contributes to a productive and dedicated volunteer force.

The spirit of giving is cultivated at RSVP's annual recognition events as well. Volunteers look forward to an annual recognition event where two purposes are served -- the volunteers feel recognized by those in the community and the community is given an opportunity say "thank you" in a visible way.

## Narratives

Donations from area business are acknowledged at these events. The annual recognition event also gives volunteers an opportunity to socialize with and be recognized by fellow volunteers from their own and other stations. In support of the program, our elected local, state and national government representatives each provide a proclamation recognizing the accomplishments and dedication of RSVP volunteers.

The RSVP staff is proactive in promoting awareness of our volunteers' contributions to meeting community needs in other ways. The project maintains positive relations with local media, giving staff the opportunity to explain the program and its benefits on local radio and TV stations several times during the year. Local magazines and newspapers frequently carry articles about the program, its volunteer opportunities, or the accomplishments of its volunteers.

Staff produces a bi-weekly press release that is sent to all local media. Staff cultivation of these good media relations works in concert with public service announcements and often induces prospective volunteers to contact the RSVP staff. We link our Website to major agency partners to provide greater exposure and have set up a Facebook account.

Staff maintains continuing volunteer support and loyalty by responding promptly to volunteer inquiries, through assistance with appropriate station activities, and by offering occasional social activities. A telephone call when hours aren't reported or a card sent during an illness often are the most effective ways to retain and motivate RSVP volunteers over the long term. Our "Birthday Call" program, completely staffed by a dedicated volunteer, makes sure RSVP is in direct contact at least once during the year, wishing the volunteer a happy birthday and at the same time verifying pertinent information and confirming that the volunteer is still pleased with their assignment. This program has greatly improved our ability to identify, in a pleasant manner, those who are no longer able or interested in volunteering. Our efforts to update our database are ongoing.

The project's recruitment record over the years speaks for itself. We routinely attract between 175 and

## Narratives

200 new volunteers annually. RSVP inculcates a lifestyle that enhances the health, vigor, and longevity of enrollees according to numerous studies (Harvard, Mayo Clinic, Michigan University, NIMH, Senior Corps, etc.). The average age of our volunteer group--74 years--provides anecdotal support for the health and longevity benefits of community service. Our volunteer retention for life exceeds 50%, while 95% of our volunteers report enhanced life satisfaction and healthy aging benefits. Additionally, our volunteers typically contribute over twice the average time of other community volunteers. Since 2009 our volunteers have provided more than 653,000 hours of community service. Many agencies state that they would not be able to provide their services without RSVP volunteers. The project continues successful recruiting practices and manages to balance its losses from attrition. Although we are projecting a decrease (calculated at 85% of 813 volunteers listed in Appendix A, Part 1, California Opportunity #8) in total numbers of volunteers for our program, we are concentrating our efforts on the Corporation's specific focus areas of Healthy Futures, Veterans & Military Families, and Environmental Stewardship. We intend to strengthen our volunteer commitment to these areas, while recognizing Economic Opportunity and Disaster Services as areas to address as well. The volunteer base and the station base will be carefully scrutinized to assure we are meeting the grant objectives as outlined in the 2013 NOFA.

To absorb those current volunteers who will otherwise be displaced due to our new focus, we are developing a new program, tentatively named Central Coast Senior Volunteers (CCSV). These volunteers would have the opportunity to select RSVP and the specific focus areas we offer there, or select a model more oriented to "Community Needs." We believe in this manner we will accomplish the best balance for our rural communities and minimize any hard feelings that could be generated by the change in the Corporation's focus on more specific areas eligible for CNCS grant funding. The CCSV will be a separate program of Senior Volunteer Services, with its own funding and guidelines. We will pattern it after RSVP but will be very clear as we roll it out that it is not an affiliate of RSVP,

## Narratives

nor is it an offshoot of that program. We hope to be able to offer a supplemental insurance benefit to those who participate in the new program and plan to recognize the accomplishments of those choosing to join the new volunteer model. Stations that will be "graduated" out of the RSVP program because they do not meet the more specific CNCS parameters will be offered inclusion in the CCSV program. Separate staff, assisted by capable volunteers, will administer the CCSV program.

By developing the CCSV group we will send a clear message to our local supporters (San Luis Obispo County and City, Altrusa and the Lions' Clubs, etc.) that we recognize the need to continue supporting all agencies in our geographic area. These local supporters have been and will be promised during their grant process that a specific number of volunteers will give of their time and be assigned to agencies that CNCS will no longer fund. Senior Volunteer Services will use the CCSV group to honor those commitments, and to encourage continued local support of both programs.

Our project performance is assessed to assure goals and objectives are met and that these result in a high quality project through the annual evaluation process conducted by the Project Advisory Council, complemented by RSVP staff surveys of groups of volunteers and agencies. Likewise, the staff maintains contact quarterly with site coordinators, either through drop-in visits or other forms of communication to foster a collaborative spirit.

Information and data are managed primarily through Volunteer Reporter which is the database we use to track volunteers, their skills and interests, station assignments, hours served and other information pertinent to their accomplishments within the RSVP program. These readily available statistics allow us to validate the enormous impact our volunteers have on the communities we are serving. This information is shared with the community at large, in addition to various local, state and federal agencies. In this manner we are able to quantify the importance of our volunteers to all our communities.

We utilize all media forms such as newsprint, PSA's, radio and individual interviews with journalists to

## Narratives

share these amazing statistics. Impact data is particularly useful for press releases to educate the public, and is also effective for group presentations. Whenever we have an opportunity to share our stories we can back them up with valid statistics, and that helps us attract supporters, as well as new volunteers.

Our RSVP uses a set of forms based on the RSVP Handbook to ensure proper management and reporting of hours/mileage. Due to the sophistication of the Volunteer Reporter we can gather and present data in a variety of ways for the reporting/application requirements of the project's funding sources.

Project resources, both financial and in-kind, are managed to ensure accountability and efficient use of available resources. Our accounting system is QuickBooks and we utilize the services of a contract bookkeeper who specializes in non-profit accounting. We also engage the services of a local CPA who specializes in non-profit accounting and schedule a Financial Review in one year, followed by an Audit the next year. We have an active Finance Committee drawn from the sponsor's Board of Directors. This committee meets regularly to evaluate the current financial health of RSVP, closely monitoring actual performance against budget and identifying areas to be addressed by the Board. During the tenure of the current RSVP Director the project has operated within a budget based on all grants awarded and donations to RSVP.

Systems are in place to ensure accountability and provide the ability to trace an action from inception to conclusion. Our accounting procedures present our financial condition on a cash basis that is clearly understood by all. This basic principle of operating ensures that money could not be obligated or spent prior to receipt. At the request of the Board, an Executive Summary is provided at the Board Meetings, validated by the set of Financial Reports presented by our bookkeeper.

In addition to Corporation grant funds we rely on other grant sources: County of San Luis Obispo (received \$12,000) and City of San Luis Obispo (received \$1,500) for fiscal year 2012-2013. Local

## Narratives

funding from community service groups as well as a variety of fundraising events and a community campaign round out our sources of income. To combat the recent fiscal downturn, our fundraising efforts have increased over the past three years and the recent 4th Annual Raffle provided a net return of just over \$10,000. Our next event, the 3rd Annual Rummage Sale, will be held on October 26th and 27th. With the assistance of a very capable Fundraising Committee, and our traditionally good press coverage, we anticipate building on our prior numbers and identifying additional fundraising opportunities.

We have a solid and on-going relationship with a qualified computer professional who audits the performance of our computers on an annual basis. Our computer systems and printer are networked within the San Luis Obispo Office. We are able to share files, which has resulted in improved productivity. We have recently contracted with Constant Comment to allow us to quickly disseminate information of interest to a select area or the mass membership, and have received a very favorable response.

The RSVP project occupies space in 3 cities, one entirely donated and two rented at below market value. Our Northern Santa Barbara County office in Santa Maria relocated in March 2011. We now share space with the Area Agency on Aging. This is quite beneficial for us because our ground floor office is very accessible to our volunteers, and there is plenty of available parking. Being so close to Area Agency on Aging increases our connection to multiple community resources serving seniors. Since we are an incumbent agency we will be providing a 30% match to the CNCS grant. This, along with our many other assets--reputation, name recognition (Senior Volunteer Services and RSVP are synonymous in the geographic area we serve), proven ability to deliver on promised services in a fiscally sound manner, plus qualified and experienced staff and leadership--all add up to our being the best candidate for receipt of this grant. Our track record speaks for itself. No one else in the area has the degree of expertise and documented experience we possess in attracting, placing and managing

## Narratives

senior volunteers to respond to needs identified in the CNCS focus areas. We believe the focus of the competitive grant process will broaden our opportunities to seek and secure awards from new partners to sustain and expand the project.

### Organizational Capability

Our organization's experience in the proposed program area is well documented. Senior Volunteer Services is a volunteer and human services agency emphasizing services to adults (over 55) and to their communities. Senior Volunteer Services is incorporated with its own IRS tax-exempt (77-0433542) number. We promote volunteer opportunities for mature adults both as a way to sustain health and vitality of this growing population and to utilize the experience, knowledge, and expertise of this valuable human resource to serve local needs.

Key staff positions and incumbent personnel responsible for program management follow. Executive Director - Marie Brinkmeyer: Marie possesses over 35 years' executive level human resource management experience and almost five years' volunteer management experience for RSVP of the Central Coast. Marie had full responsibility for managing the Human Resource function for up to 1300 employees at an acute-care hospital for nearly 25 years, assuring compliance with all California Labor Laws and Medicare reporting requirements. She is a skilled and prudent manager, seeks best alternatives in problem solving, and is one who regularly acknowledges her staff (both paid and volunteer) and their contributions to a smooth-running organization. Marie is a strong believer in the value volunteers bring to community issues and has volunteered in some capacity most of her life. Marie is accustomed to meeting deadlines and is fully conversant with the requirements for grant reporting and the need to identify and meet performance objectives.

Northern Santa Barbara Area Coordinator - Nancy Rodriguez: Nancy values the senior community and what they have to offer in terms of wisdom, skill and talents. She is well versed in community outreach, is knowledgeable about local human service agencies, and is skilled in matching those eager

## Narratives

to volunteer their services with the expressed agency needs. She has lived in the Santa Maria area for over 15 years. She is immersed in the life of Santa Maria, both as a local realtor and as an avid volunteer for community causes. She has developed methods of quickly informing her volunteers of immediate events and has increased the hours reported in her area significantly. She has excellent communication skills and presents RSVP in a very gracious manner. She willingly flexes her hours to accommodate particular outreach events without incurring added salary expense. Nancy's bilingual ability is invaluable in a community with a large Spanish-speaking population.

San Luis Obispo County Area Coordinator - Cheryl Kippen: Cheryl has more than 15 years of local experience in non-profit enterprises. She possesses a certificate in Geriatric Care Management, a Bachelor's in Education and a Master's in Counseling. She has acted as a Program Manager for various agencies and is well known within non-profit circles. She interfaces with volunteers and site managers in a dynamic and enthusiastic manner, always in "recruitment" and "appreciation" mode, organized and attentive. She provides added value to stations by volunteering her own time to assist them in their mission. She already knows many of our agency partners and has an excellent reputation within the communities we are serving. Cheryl prides herself on prompt follow-up to assure that volunteers and stations are fully informed of the ongoing need for open communication. She takes great pride in being the "link" to really satisfying volunteer assignments.

Data Coordinator - Bernadine Barrow: Bernadine is the most senior member of our staff with more than 7 years of service. Her varied background includes running her own retail business and working as a local realtor. She is very familiar with the entire area and has excellent contacts within the community. Bernadine's added value to RSVP is her first-hand knowledge of so many of our long-term volunteers and agencies. She quickly recognizes many volunteers by sight when they come to our office, or when visiting with them at recognition events. Bernadine is now primarily our "Data Coordinator" and has full responsibility for encoding into the Volunteer Reporter system. This

## Narratives

assignment accommodates Bernadine's limited mobility and makes the most of her organizational skills to the benefit of RSVP.

The entire staff possesses extensive experience in recruiting, interviewing, screening, and placing volunteers.

Collaboration with other agencies is key to our efforts. Board Members possess long-term associations with RSVP, not only with this RSVP but one in San Francisco as well. Several have served on this RSVP Project Advisory Council; one is a former Director of this RSVP program; others have been RSVP volunteers. Collectively, our Board Members possess a broad perspective and strong understanding of RSVP and volunteer community service. They are excellent representatives of the geographic area served. Our Treasurer possesses extensive knowledge of accounting with a particular emphasis on the non-profit sector. Other Board members include business and non-profit community members, as well as retirees with particular strengths appropriate to the agency's needs. The former director of this RSVP, Diane Maiorano, serves as the Chair of Senior Volunteer Services Board of Directors. The addition of a former bank president and CEO has brought new strength to us as well. The manager of one of our most prolific Food Banks recently agreed to serve on the Board and he brings the perspective of those "in the trenches."

Our agency's financial management systems utilize QuickBooks and follow generally accepted accounting principles. We operate on a cash basis that is clearly understood and easily managed. Senior Volunteer Services has now managed funds through more than two full CNCS grant cycles. We have performed within budget during those cycles. Board Members with financial expertise augment the skills of our bookkeeper and we pay close attention to variances to minimize problems arising. We have established a regular system of validating our financial strengths -- scheduling a "Financial Review" one year which is followed by an "Audit" the next year. We are fortunate in having secured the services of a CPA who is fully conversant with the reporting requirements for non-

## Narratives

profits and our bookkeeper specializes in non-profits as well. We are fully cognizant of the reporting requirements for the CNCS grant and have submitted reports in a timely manner. We meet deadlines and produce anticipated results.

Our agency's track record in successfully managing volunteer programs, involvement with seniors and impact-driven programming speaks for itself. The staff is committed to the ideals of RSVP and takes every opportunity to heighten community awareness as to the benefits to the volunteer but also to the agencies and their clients who are served through RSVP volunteer efforts. Since January 2009 our volunteers have provided more than 653,000 hours of service. The fact that our group of volunteers continues to increase, both in size and in satisfaction levels, speaks to the success of this program. We are skilled in managing volunteers in impact-based programs. Because we are already partnering with a diverse group of agencies responsible for services to the frail elderly and disabled, returning military and families, and environmental stewardship we are in a unique position to respond to the CNCS focus areas.

We are assured of adequate facilities, equipment, supplies, purchasing procedures and personnel management support. We have rented our main location from a church in San Luis Obispo for many years. Our Santa Maria office is located in the building with Area Agency on Aging. The Paso Robles Senior Center provides in-kind office space to allow us to recruit sorely needed volunteers in the North County. We have followed a replacement plan and upgraded four of our computer systems during the past two years, with two more planned for this year. Our main office systems are networked for greater efficiency. In addition, we contract our offsite back-up services with Carbonite to assure we can depend on all data preservation. We have clear and concise purchasing procedures. Our employee handbook clearly defines roles for staff and administrators. Written policies and procedures, including a travel policy must be acknowledged in writing. Job descriptions are reviewed annually for accuracy. Employees are reviewed at least annually. Qualified applicants are available in the event of

## Narratives

a personnel vacancy.

Procedures and systems for self-assessment, evaluation and continuous improvement are tied to the well-established volunteer and station surveys which our Project Advisory Council initiates annually. Any time we draft and/or establish a new policy we look back to examine its effectiveness and whether or not it appears sensible to continue it. In that manner we are in a continuous cycle of improvement. We have a formal Conflict of Interest Policy and a proposed Records Management Policy in being developed. It is helpful to have new members join the Board. They require orientation to the program and give us the opportunity to reflect on why we do what we do, clarify terms for those unfamiliar with RSVP, and in general take a critical look at all our policies and procedures.

### Other

Our hoped-for infusion of volunteers from the Baby Boomer population has not materialized. A 2004 report by the Harvard School of Public Health painted a fairly encouraging picture of Boomers' involvement in community service. Unfortunately, it also found that Boomers are concentrated in metropolitan areas (we are rural), and since that report was published our country has suffered a huge economic downturn that has affected many Boomers' lifestyles. More recent CNCS figures indicate a downward trend in volunteerism among that age group. With this in mind, we will work with our community partners to develop new and possibly less traditional volunteer opportunities that appeal to a broader and more diverse range of active seniors. Our best source of recruitment continues to be our volunteers who encourage friends and relatives to give RSVP a try, along with local newspapers and PSA's, as we consider innovative ways to build up our volunteer base. A recent study by California Polytechnic University at San Luis Obispo, in collaboration with community groups fighting hunger found that farmers in San Luis Obispo County produce enough fruit and vegetables to give each county resident 7.5 pounds a day of this nutritious food. Despite this the number of those needing help from the Food Bank has rises by 90% over the last five years. This

## Narratives

is called "the paradox of plenty," and the collaboration of community groups has come up with a highly detailed documentation of the problem as well as recommendations on how to solve it. Of interest is the fact that children make up 19 percent of the county's population but constitute 40 percent of the Food Bank's users. Seniors and Latinos are also disproportionately affected. Structural impediments for getting out of the quagmire exist. This county is driven by agriculture and tourism, which generally pays its workers low wages. Add to that the lack of housing that even people making an average wage can afford to buy, and the result is a situation in which many families must choose between buying food and paying their rent or mortgage and medical expenses. The full text of this study can be viewed at the San Luis Obispo County website, under the Board of Supervisors agenda for October 16, 2012. This situation relates back to our commitment to supporting agencies involved in healthy futures.

We continue to support emerging opportunities to help re-integrate our returning military personnel into civilian life. As increased numbers are separated from the service, there will be an ongoing need to assist the agencies involved in addressing these issues. That is where we can most be useful.

The pool of RSVP volunteers who serve in wildlife protection, trail management and park management/restoration/

beautification will be increased to meet the demand of agencies whose missions fall within that focus area.

RSVP of the Central Coast is excited at the opportunity to expand and further quantify our contributions to communities and back up our goals with measurable results. We look forward to a continuing relationship with CNCS.

### **PNS Amendment (if applicable)**

Not applicable.